

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An intervertebral spacing implant comprising:
a spacing member adapted for implanting between adjacent
5 vertebral bodies of a human spine as a load-bearing
replacement for a spinal disc, said spacing member further
comprising an external, non-porous, concavo-convex contour
with respect to one dimension of said spacing member.

- 10 2. The intervertebral spacing implant of claim 1,
wherein the spacing member is constructed from a rigid, non-
resilient load-bearing material that is incapable of elastic
deformation.

- 15 3. The intervertebral spacing implant of claim 2,
wherein the spacing member comprises metal.

- 20 4. The intervertebral spacing implant of claim 3,
wherein the spacing member comprises titanium.

5. The intervertebral spacing implant of claim 2,
wherein the spacing member comprises ceramic.

6. The intervertebral spacing implant of claim 1,
wherein the spacing member includes an anterior wall and a
posterior wall, and wherein the external concavo-convex
contour of the spacer is defined by the posterior wall being
5 concave in a horizontal dimension and by the anterior wall
being convex in a horizontal dimension.

7. The intervertebral spacing implant of claim 6,
wherein the anterior wall and the posterior wall of the
10 spacing member are each linear in a vertical dimension.

8. The intervertebral spacing implant of claim 7,
wherein the concavo-convex contour comprises a concave
posterior side, and a convex anterior side disposed in a
15 substantial parallel orientation with respect to the concave
posterior side.

9. The intervertebral spacing implant of claim 1,
wherein the spacing member defines an imaginary arcuate
20 centerline residing between opposing sides of the external
concavo-convex contour of said spacing member to thereby
enable said spacing member to be inserted thorough an incision
along an arcuate insertion path.

10. The intervertebral spacing implant of claim 9,
wherein the spacing member is configured and adapted to be
inserted along said arcuate movement path in a manner such
that said arcuate movement path coincides with the imaginary
5 arcuate centerline of said spacing member.

11. The intervertebral spacing implant of claim 1,
wherein the spacing member further comprises a disc-like
member having a thickness, and a length that is greater in
10 length than said thickness, and a width that is greater in
width than said thickness.

12. The intervertebral spacing implant of claim 11,
wherein the thickness of the spacing member is defined by a
15 perimeter wall that constitutes the concave side and the
convex side of the external concavo-convex contour of said
spacing member.

13. The intervertebral spacing implant of claim 1,
20 wherein the spacing member further comprises an upper side
having a plurality of spaced-apart recesses formed therein.

14. The intervertebral spacing implant of claim 13,
wherein the recesses are elongate and are disposed in a
substantial parallel orientation with respect to each other.

5 15. An intervertebral spacing implant comprising:
 a spacing member adapted for implanting between adjacent
 vertebral bodies of a human spine as a load-bearing
 replacement for a spinal disc, said spacing member further
 comprising a non-porous body having a tapered external shape
10 such that said spacing member narrows in thickness in a first
 direction.

16. The intervertebral spacing implant of claim 15, said
spacing member having a discontinuous upper surface.

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17. The intervertebral spacing implant of claim 15,
wherein the tapered external shape of said spacing member
narrows in thickness in a continuous manner along a majority
width of said spacing member in an anterior-to-posterior
20 direction.

18. The intervertebral spacing implant of claim 17,
wherein the spacing member include an upper surface that forms

an acute angle with respect to a horizontal plan, said acute angle being in a range of two to six degrees.

19. The intervertebral spacing implant of claim 18, the
5 spacing member having a discontinuous upper surface.

20. The intervertebral spacing implant of claim 19,
wherein the upper surface includes a plurality of elongate
recesses formed therein, said recesses extending in an
10 anterior-to-posterior direction.

21. The intervertebral spacing implant of claim 18,
wherein the spacing member includes a lower surface that forms
an acute angle with respect to a horizontal plan, said acute
15 angle being in a range of approximately two degrees to eight
degrees.

22. The intervertebral spacing implant of claim 21,
wherein the upper and lower surface of the spacing member each
20 form a continuous acute angle of approximately four degrees
with respect to a horizontal plane, for a total continuous
taper of approximately eight degrees.

23. The intervertebral spacing implant of claim 15,
wherein said spacing member further comprises a convex side,
and wherein the tapered external shape of said spacing member
is adapted such that said spacing member narrows in thickness
5 in an anterior-to-posterior direction when implanted with said
convex side facing an anterior direction.

24. The intervertebral spacing implant of claim 23,
wherein the spacing member further comprises an upper surface,
10 and wherein the tapered external shape of the spacing member
is such that the upper surface of said spacing member defines
a first acute angle with respect to a plane that is orthogonal
to the convex side of the spacing member.

15 25. The intervertebral spacing implant of claim 15,
wherein the tapered external shape of said spacing member
comprises a taper sufficient in degree to permit a lordosis
spinal configuration to be restored when said spacing member
is sandwiched between adjacent intervertebral bodies.

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26. An intervertebral spacing implant system comprising:
a spacing member adapted for implanting between adjacent
intervertebral bodies of a human spine;

positioning means for enabling a surgeon to adjust a position of the spacing member when said spacing member resides between adjacent intervertebral bodies, said positioning means comprising a sheath member, a rod member
5 slidably insertable into the sheath member, and a means for releasably attaching the rod member to the spacing member.

27. The intervertebral spacing implant system of claim 26, wherein the rod member has a longer length than the sheath
10 member, such that a proximal portion of the rod member protrudes from the sheath member when said rod member resides within said sheath member and is attached to the spacing member.

15 28. The intervertebral spacing implant system of claim 26, wherein the means for releasably attaching the rod member to the spacing member further comprises a threaded engagement.

20 29. The intervertebral spacing implant system of claim 28, wherein the means for releasably attaching the rod member to the spacing member further comprises a female threaded recess formed in the spacing member, and wherein the rod member comprises a male threaded distal end having a size and

configuration sufficient to permit threaded engagement between said male threaded distal end of the rod member and the female threaded recess formed in the spacing member.

5 30. An intervertebral spacing implant system comprising:
 a spacing member adapted for implanting between adjacent
 intervertebral bodies of a human spine;

 positioning means for enabling a surgeon to adjust a
 position of the spacing member when said spacing member
10 resides between adjacent intervertebral bodies, said
 positioning means further comprising an attachment means for
 becoming releasably attached to the spacing member at a first
 area of attachment, and a stabilizing means for removably
 contacting the spacing member along a contact line that
15 surrounds the first area of attachment.

 31. The intervertebral spacing implant system of claim
 30, wherein the stabilizing means further comprises means for
 contacting the spacing member along a circular contact line
20 that circumscribes the first area of attachment, said circular
 contact line being disposed in a substantially co-axial
 orientation with respect to the first area of attachment.

32. A method of implanting an artificial intervertebral disc comprising:

(a) making an incision in an anulus of a human spinal column between adjacent vertebral bodies of said spinal column
5 to thereby expose a space residing between said adjacent vertebral bodies;

(b) inserting a spacing member through the incision and into position between the adjacent vertebral bodies, and positioning said spacing member at an anterior location with
10 respect to the spinal column such that more intervertebral space resides posteriorly to said spacing member than anteriorly thereto;

(c) applying compression to posterior portions of the adjacent vertebral bodies.

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33. The method of claim 32, further comprising:

(d) removing a natural human disc from the space, prior to part (b).

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34. The method of claim 32, wherein part (c) further comprises compressing the posterior portions of the adjacent vertebral bodies toward each other to a degree sufficient to move said adjacent vertebral bodies into a sagittal alignment.

35. The method of claim 34, further comprising:
(e) attaching a holding means to the adjacent vertebral bodies for holding said adjacent vertebral bodies in the sagittal alignment to thereby inhibit said vertebral bodies
5 from moving out of sagittal alignment.

36. The method of claim 32, wherein part (b) further comprises positioning the spacing member sufficiently anteriorly such that said spacing member resides in contact
10 with an anterior longitudinal ligament of the spinal column.

37. A method of implanting an artificial intervertebral disc comprising:

(a) making an incision in an anulus of a human spinal column between adjacent vertebral bodies of said spinal column to thereby expose a space residing between said adjacent vertebral bodies;

(b) inserting a spacing member through the incision and into position between the adjacent vertebral bodies, and
20 positioning said spacing member at an anterior location with respect to the spinal column such that more intervertebral space resides posteriorly to said spacing member than anteriorly thereto;

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(c) placing bone grafting material through the incision and into position between the adjacent vertebral bodies such that said bone grafting material resides between the spacing member and a posterior longitudinal ligament of the spinal column; and

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(d) attaching a compression means to posterior portions of the adjacent vertebral bodies to thereby force said posterior portions of the adjacent vertebral bodies toward each other and thereby compress the bone grafting material, said compression means comprising pedicle screws and rod members intercoupling said screws.

38. The method of claim 37, wherein the bone grafting material comprises autogenous bone.

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39. A method of implanting an artificial intervertebral disc comprising:

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(a) inserting a spacing member into position between adjacent vertebral bodies of a human spinal column, and positioning said spacing member at an anterior location with respect to the spinal column such that more intervertebral

space resides posteriorly to said spacing member than anteriorly thereto; and

(b) applying compression to posterior portions of the adjacent vertebral bodies.

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40. The method of claim 39, further comprising additional parts to be performed prior to part (b), said additional parts comprising:

(i) placing bone grafting material into position between the adjacent vertebral bodies such that said bone grafting material resides between the spacing member and a posterior longitudinal ligament of the spinal column; and

(ii) attaching a compression means to posterior portions of the adjacent vertebral bodies to thereby force said posterior portions of the adjacent vertebral bodies toward each other and thereby compress the bone grafting material, said compression means comprising pedicle screws and rod members intercoupling said screws.

20 41. A method of implanting an artificial intervertebral disc comprising:

(a) making an incision in an anulus of a human spinal column between adjacent vertebral bodies of said spinal column

to thereby expose a space residing between said adjacent vertebral bodies;

(b) selecting a spacing member comprising an external concavo-convex contour with respect to one dimension of said spacing member, wherein the spacing member defines an imaginary arcuate centerline residing between opposing sides of the external concavo-convex contour of said spacing member;

(c) inserting the spacing member along an arcuate insertion path through the incision such that the imaginary arcuate centerline follows said arcuate insertion path during the insertion.

42. A method of implanting an artificial intervertebral disc comprising:

(a) making an incision in an anulus of a human spinal column between adjacent vertebral bodies of said spinal column to thereby expose a space residing between said adjacent vertebral bodies;

(b) inserting a trial spacer through the incision and into position between the adjacent vertebral bodies, and evaluating a snugness of fit of said spacer as it resides between said adjacent vertebral bodies and determining a spacer size thereby;

(c) selecting a spacing member having the spacer size determined in part (b) and inserting said spacing member through the incision and into position between the adjacent vertebral bodies.

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43. The method of claim 42, wherein part (b) further comprises dislodging any unwanted soft tissue from between the vertebral bodies with the trial spacer.